



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION**

(Reference: [Inquiry into the ACT Auditor General report No. 6 of 2021:
Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools](#))

Members:

**MR M PETTERSSON (Chair)
MR J DAVIS (Deputy Chair)
MS N LAWDER**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

MONDAY, 11 APRIL 2022

**Secretary to the committee:
Dr D Monk (Ph: 620 50129)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 1.55 pm.

BERRY, MS YVETTE, Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women

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SIMMONS, MS JANE, Deputy Director-General, Education Directorate

MCALISTER, MS CORALIE, Chief Executive Officer, Teacher Quality Institute

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, and welcome to the third public hearing of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion inquiry into the ACT Auditor-General's report No 6 of 2021: *Teaching quality in ACT public schools*. Before we go further, I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people.

Today we are hearing from Minister Berry. When you take a question on notice, please state, "I will take that as a question taken on notice." The first time you speak, please acknowledge that you have read the privilege statement.

There are no opening statements, so I will lead off with a question. My first question relates to the transfer round and the distribution of experienced teachers in the ACT. Could someone explain to me and the committee what the purpose of the transfer round is?

Ms Berry: I will ask Mr Matthews to respond to that question.

Mr Matthews: I have read and understood the privilege statement. The purpose of the transfer round is essentially to facilitate the movement of teachers between schools. The way that employment arrangements work in the ACT public system is that all teachers are employed by the ACT government; then they are placed in individual schools, normally for a period of five years, initially. As part of the career development discussions that occur between teachers and their supervisors, that period can be extended. For a range of reasons, including personal reasons, teachers can opt to go into a transfer round earlier.

Essentially, the way the transfer round works is that a pool of teachers is identified through a mixture of teachers that are currently working in the system, as well as new recruits. It is a matching process between the schools and their vacancies, and that pool of applicants. It is a highly collaborative approach between the education support office and the individual principals. It is very much a working process. Principals or their delegates come in with their sleeves rolled up, and there is a lot of work looking at individual CVs, the specialisations and qualifications of individual teachers. A decision is then made about where to place that teacher in each of the schools.

Obviously, teachers get to express a preference as part of that process. They can have

views about where they would prefer to work, and those are taken into account ultimately in making those decisions. So it is one mechanism to support a balanced teaching profile for each of the schools. We do acknowledge that the balance between experienced teachers and new educators does vary across all of our schools. We have been engaging with the Australian Education Union for about the last two years on that issue, both to further identify the issues and opportunities and to work towards the objective of having a balanced teaching profile for each of the schools.

We think there are significant benefits for new teachers in the system to be in schools where they can be mentored and supported by other experienced teachers. Of course, we want to set people up for a long and successful career in ACT public schools.

Obviously, one of the factors that we have to take into account is where the vacancies are. If there are vacancies in schools where there are already higher percentages of new educators, of course, some new educators may also be placed in those schools, but we do work together collectively to try to strike that balance.

THE CHAIR: You have knocked off a bunch of my supplementary questions; well done. What are the mechanisms that are currently being explored to further evenly distribute teachers across our schools?

Mr Matthews: Essentially, it is the process that I have talked about, but with a strong awareness from all of the participants that there is value in having an experienced teaching profile that reflects the system needs and the needs of individual schools. In terms of the way that we fund schools, they are funded, essentially, at the middle point of the pay scale. We do encourage schools also to have a balanced staffing profile through the way that we fund them.

We are encouraging schools to consider the process around what happens at the end of the five-year placement in the individual school. It is fair to say that, over time, some practice has emerged where teachers can stay at an individual school for more than one five-year period. We are trying to encourage both our school leaders and our teachers to see the benefit, professionally and from a system perspective, of moving between schools, to be able to make a contribution in different ways across the territory.

THE CHAIR: What I am taking from these answers is that there are not necessarily rigid policies that are going to be changed; it is more about having an awareness of and encouragement within the Education Directorate. They are encouraged to have a more even distribution of teachers; is that correct?

Mr Matthews: I think that is right. I would say that we are trying to actively incentivise that through cultural approaches. Mr Pettersson, I am sure you appreciate that the process of staffing schools is a very complicated one. One of the factors, of course, is the experience level of the teachers. There are also a lot of specialist roles that exist across the system. Depending on the qualifications and the specialisation of the teachers, there is a smaller number of schools that they may be suitable to work in. We also have teachers with specialist early childhood experience and others that are more experienced in the senior secondary setting.

When we look at mapping all of that out together, there is no doubt that in certain sectors, and in certain specialisations, there is less mobility and there is less supply of teachers. We take all of that into account. We do have strong support and strong feedback from our principals that they see the value in having a balanced teaching profile. To take a quota based or a more rigid approach would have some other unintended consequences, so we would really have to weigh that up against the overall benefit of the current process.

We want to be very clear as well that the way the teacher transfer process works is through an agreed procedure under our enterprise bargaining agreement with the Australian Education Union. We have said that we are always open to reviewing those procedures and looking at ways that we can improve them. We are very open to considering any improvements or changes that are necessary.

MS LAWDER: Do I take it that there cannot, or would not, be a transfer against the wishes of a teacher?

Mr Matthews: Ms Lawder, that can occur. It is a very detailed and individualised approach when we get to that situation. Essentially, the default is that a teacher is placed in a school for a five-year period, generally; it can be for a shorter period. At the end of that period, a principal may well say that they have excess teachers or more teachers in a particular specialisation than they need at that time. Therefore that teacher would enter the transfer round. That would not be through their own volition but through a consequence of a decision around the needs of the school at that time; so, yes, that can occur in that way.

MS LAWDER: Is it a bit like a salary cap? Does that come into play as well?

Mr Matthews: I was wondering whether I would use a sporting analogy. It is more like a draft, if you like, in that sense. Essentially, it is about how staff are moved to where the requirements are across the system. In terms of budget, obviously, the salary for teachers is funded centrally through the education support office. If a school has a very experienced teaching profile, they will experience some budgetary pressures, and we will work with that school to both manage that budgetary pressure and to support the objective of a more balanced teaching profile.

MS LAWDER: If I can go back to my original question about whether it could be against the wishes of a teacher, you stressed that it is a five-year placement or appointment. If a teacher specifically said, "I want to stay here; I don't want to go," could you still move that person, despite a clearly expressed desire to stay?

Mr Matthews: Yes, Ms Lawder.

MR DAVIS: I have some questions particularly around relief staff. Do we have the number of how many relief or substitute teachers currently work across ACT public schools?

Mr Matthews: I might take a quick second to find the exact number. I believe that we did answer a question on notice on this matter quite recently. The number that is in my head is that there are approximately 400 registered casual teachers. You will have

to give me a quick second to find the exact number.

MR DAVIS: That is okay, Mr Matthews; for the sake of my line of questioning, I am happy to work on an approximate of about 400.

Mr Matthews: Mr Davis, I do have it now. It was in response to a question taken on notice from Mr Parton on 8 February 2022. As of 3 March 2022, there were 453 registered teachers available for casual engagement and there were 193 casual relief bookings logged on that day. Of course, we have a general pool of casual relief teachers, and they are not available for work every day. They also have their preferences around which schools they would prefer to work in and what their area of specialisation is. As of that date, there were 453 registered casuals.

MR DAVIS: What would you say, Mr Matthews, are the profiles of those teachers? Instinctively, I would imagine most people would assume most relief staff are experienced teachers who are retired or semi-retired. Would that be a fair assessment?

Mr Matthews: I think that is correct, Mr Davis, as well as, potentially, both mothers and fathers that have young children and are exercising those parental responsibilities but looking for some work here and there, depending on their own family circumstances.

Whilst we have that casual pool, I want to emphasise that, in line with the government's policies, we have been turning as many of our staff into full-time permanent staff as possible. We have a process around the conversion of casuals to permanent teaching staff. That is both a retention strategy and a workforce management approach. It is also about the industrial rights of the individual. A number of the people that are remaining as casual do it for those very specific reasons that you have referred to.

MR DAVIS: I will fixate on this number a bit, the 453 casual relief staff. What relationship, formal or informal, does the directorate have with these staff? Is their relationship with the school and school principal? What is the nature of their relationship with the directorate?

Mr Matthews: Generally, there is a direct relationship between the principal and the casual staff. A principal generally has a pool of casual staff that they have worked with previously; they know of their individual circumstances and they reach out to them, depending on the requirements of their school at that time.

During this year, we have also established a centralised relief pool. We have done that to augment those arrangements. It is a relatively modest-sized pool. In that situation we have guaranteed those casual staff work, regardless of whether they get placed in an individual school or not, just as a way of maximising the availability of those extra staff and incentivising them to continue to work in our system. My colleague Mr Ackland might help me out with the exact number, but there are approximately 30 people in that situation. We have been using them this year to deal with particular staff shortages as advised to us by school principals.

MR DAVIS: With those approximately 30, are they employed by the directorate as

full-time permanent teaching staff members and then just deployed in areas of need on a daily or weekly basis?

Mr Matthews: In that situation, yes, Mr Davis, but it is also based on their preferences and their availability. They might not be able to work full time; they might only be able to work three days a week, for example. Essentially, in that situation we have offered them that amount of work for a set period of time, on the basis that they get placed in a school identified by the education support office.

MR DAVIS: Can I get a better understanding about how we identified and then made the positions available for those 30 previously casual employees from the 453? I assume that is 30 from the 453?

Mr Matthews: Approximately, Mr Davis. The numbers of casual staff do vary from time to time. If we are speaking in broad numbers, it is around, say, a pool of 500, and that would be a part of that. In that instance we wrote to each of the members of the casual relief register and made this offer to them. That was the number of those staff that accepted that offer.

We were very open ended. We did not have a quota. We did not have a set number that we were looking at filling. We just wanted to see which of our casual staff might be interested in formalising their arrangements in that way. Essentially, they have become temporary contractors rather than casuals, in that sense, in that we have offered them a guaranteed amount of work over a set period of time.

MR DAVIS: With those 30, in terms of being self-selected from that broader group, have we provided those permanent full-time positions to every member of the casual relief pool who asked for one?

Mr Matthews: Mr Davis, that is a slightly different question. You said a permanent position, so I will quickly step that out. As I said, the government has policies around the conversion for insecure work. Essentially, that is for temporary staff that have been employed with the directorate, normally for a number of months. You go through a process of being converted to a full-time and permanent employee.

In the example of the central relief pool, they are not permanent officers; they are temporary staff that have an agreed amount of work for an agreed period of time. It is an arrangement that we have continued through term 1, and we plan to continue it through term 2 as well. It is a useful addition to the school-based arrangements that are in place.

MR DAVIS: Were there any staff who got in touch with the directorate in response to that email or letter, or however you got in touch with the 450, who said, “Yes, I’d like one of these more fixed positions,” for lack of a better word, and we were not able to accommodate them; or were we able to accommodate each member of that pool who said they would like to take up that opportunity?

Mr Matthews: I think it is definitely the latter, Mr Davis. We have more work than we want to offer all of these staff, so we are very interested in maximising the amount of hours that any of our staff are working, including our casual staff. I am not aware

of any specific instances where an individual might have said that they wanted this type of arrangement and have not got it. I can certainly say that our strong intent is to secure that workforce to meet the staffing needs of our schools.

MR DAVIS: I asked the question because I was contacted by a constituent who is one of the 453 in the relief pool who, being a seasoned educator, is a bit more experienced about these things than me, and put it to me that that pool appealed to them but they chose not to apply—the way they put it to me—because they valued their relationship with a particular school. They said to me that their appraisal of the situation—not mine—was that this particular school had some behavioural management challenges with young people; this particular educator valued being in that environment to be a support to the permanent workforce. They saw this email, and said, “Yes, I think I’d be interested in this position,” and chose not to pursue it because they could not be guaranteed work in that particular school environment every day.

I want to navigate a little bit more regarding what the directorate might do when presented with such a scenario, where the casual educator has said, “I want to work in this environment and I want to do it on a more fixed or semi-permanent basis.” Are we able to accommodate that in those instances?

Mr Matthews: To step that out, Mr Davis, we really do respect and want to value that relationship that individual staff have with particular schools. Often there is a strong values alignment and there is often a historical relationship with that individual school. Again, that is something that can absolutely co-exist with the central staffing pool that we have.

In relation to the specific example, obviously, what I am unaware of is what the staffing needs of that school are. That school that the teacher is attached to may or may not have a staffing requirement that requires more relief hours. The issues of our staffing are not evenly affecting each school. Some schools have sufficient staffing resources and others less so. I cannot comment on that individual situation because their individual school may not have a requirement for additional staffing resources.

In general, that is why we are trying to encourage people to feel comfortable working across multiple schools, because if they did come into the central staffing pool then we would certainly be able to utilise them in other schools.

MR DAVIS: Going back to that case example of my constituent, I am curious to find out more about how we assess a school’s staffing need. The example that was put to me by this constituent is that this school community had identified some behavioural management challenges in that particular school. I am sure that the principal would be across that. Because this particular relief teacher had a relationship with the school, and subsequently with some of the young people exhibiting problematic behaviour, they were a preferred relief teacher, and they would, on very short notice, be able to relieve permanent staff who were under immediate pressure when a young person was exhibiting challenging behaviours.

I am trying to flesh out a little bit more how much we assess these instances, like some that we have seen in the media recently, or where a school might need, based on some perfect formula, a certain amount of staff but a particular student cohort, at a

particular time, is presenting challenges where a permanent member of staff that was not necessarily allocated to a classroom may prove valuable. How is that assessed and accommodated?

Mr Matthews: Mr Davis, I could give quite a long answer about school funding, and I will not, unless you particularly invite me to. Essentially, all schools get funded on a needs-based funding basis, and that includes loading for additional needs that students have. In addition to that, there are supports provided by the education support office and additional funding that can go into supporting the needs of particular children. All of those funding mechanisms are available.

In terms of how schools staff their schools, that can include in-built relief and additional staff to support the sorts of interventions that you are talking about there—having additional staff on site, on the team, as it were, to be able to meet the needs of either individual students or a range of students in that school.

We are very confident that each of the principals is working with the education support office to get that mix right, with the right number of staff, as part of their base or by using their funding, for example, for their casual relief or other forms of support, to make sure that those resources are available. Of course, that is part of the regular dialogue that we have between the ESO and individual schools.

Ms Berry: The point that Mr Matthews went to at the end was around other supports, because it might not necessarily just be teaching staff that are required to support individual students or others at that school. The Education Directorate works very closely with Health and other community support organisations, with that in their minds as well. There could be additional allied health staff, speech therapists, social workers, learning support assistants and those kinds of supports that a school takes advantage of, rather than just the teaching workforce.

MS LAWDER: With respect to the submission from the directorate for this teaching quality inquiry, obviously, we start with the Future of Education Strategy in 2018, which was a 10-year commitment. In another area of the submission, you talk about the Education Directorate Workforce Strategy 2021-23: Delivering the Workforce for the Future of Education. Is the Future of Education Strategy overarching and workforce management sits underneath that?

Ms Berry: Yes, that is right.

MS LAWDER: Are there any other strategies that sit underneath the Future of Education Strategy?

Ms Berry: There is Set up for Success: an Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT and, of course, the implementation plans—the various phases of the implementation of the Future of Education Strategy. It should be noted that the strategy was based on four foundations which the Auditor-General's report went into, around teacher quality, in particular. These are: empowering teachers, school leaders and other professionals to meet the learning needs of all students; strengthening systems to focus on equity with equality; building communities for learning; and placing students at the centre of their learning.

All of the work that goes into the teacher quality work and the professional development of our teaching professionals is one of the big, important parts, obviously, in getting great quality education in our schools. The other part is the equity outcomes for children and young people. That is why there has been a significant focus on that in the ACT government's commitments to trialling free lunches, providing Chromebooks for everyone and access to wi-fi. We also have the inclusion work, which is another work strategy within our schools.

Ms Haire: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Ms Lawder, as you point out, the Auditor-General noted the relationship between the future of education and the workforce strategy. The other foundational elements that we pointed out in our submission that set up the framework are the directorate's own strategic plan, the people, practice and performance framework, the empowered learning professionals leadership plan. We also link ourselves back to the Australian professional standards and the national school improvement tool, and, as Mr Matthews has talked about in relation to workforce, the enterprise agreement. Those elements form the architecture. Within those, we have a range of other important programs that support equity, inclusion and quality teaching and learning. We go through some of those in our submission as well.

MS LAWDER: With the workforce strategy 2021-23, when was it developed and when was it officially launched or started?

Mr Matthews: I am just refreshing myself on the exact date, but I will start by highlighting the purpose of the workforce strategy which, effectively, is understanding that education is a multidisciplinary organisation; that we are an educational—

MS LAWDER: I am sorry to interrupt, Mr Matthews; that is covered in your submission. Could we go to the specific question? I am interested in when it was developed and when the start date or launch date was.

Mr Matthews: That information is in our annual report, Ms Lawder. I will find it during the course of this hearing. I believe it was finalised in 2018. The ED workforce strategy 2021-23 was launched in March 2021.

MS LAWDER: We are, in effect, halfway through this particular strategy, as it covers 2021 to 2023. How are we progressing on, for example, strategic recruitment of teachers and education professionals to meet current and emerging needs? Given some recent commentary, it may seem that we are struggling. Could you give me a quick overview of progress on delivery of the particular focus areas in the workforce strategy?

Ms Berry: I will ask Ms Haire to go to that, Ms Lawder. As you will know, there is a significant issue faced by the country—and, of course, the ACT is not immune to that—around the teaching workforce. However, the ACT Education Directorate has put in place a number of strategies, and we have spoken about those at length, including the task force that we have developed, along with the Australian Education Union, to dig a little bit deeper behind some of the reasons that people might be

leaving the teaching workforce earlier than we would expect. I understand that the ACT continues to have the lowest turnover in the country, if that is the right way to describe it. I will ask Ms Haire to go to some of those details.

Ms Haire: As the minister has outlined, Australia is experiencing, generally, issues around either a current or a projected shortage of teachers overall. However, that could be misunderstood in some ways because the shortages tend to be more specific and are particularly in certain disciplines and in certain parts of Australia.

Here in the ACT, as a result of COVID, over the last several months we have certainly experienced some absences as a result of illness and people needing to be in isolation, as the chair is experiencing. As a result of that, we have developed some additional strategies, such as the central relief pool that Mr Matthews was talking about before.

The work of the workforce strategy was set up, and the work was underway and underpinned by a really strong evidence base that draws on the national evidence base about the supply and demand projections for teachers, going well into the future. It was to focus on the really big pieces that relate to how we secure a high-quality workforce into the future, and that is looking at how we recruit, how we retain and how we support teachers to build their professional knowledge and expertise so that they reach their full professional potential. Those are the big pieces of the workforce strategy.

As Mr Matthews has outlined, there are the measures which have also been undertaken in other parts of Australia around securing additional casual workforce. They have had to take some even more extreme measures. We have also been working closely with the Australian Education Union around some workload reduction strategies. We are looking at the issue of workforce from a number of different facets, and that is what the workforce strategy has been set up to do. It was meant as a long-term piece of work, responding to that national projection that was certainly apparent by 2019-20. We have been fortunate to have those strategic pieces in place. However, as a result of the pandemic, we have then had to take some further actions, as Mr Matthews has set out, with things such as the casual relief pool.

MS LAWDER: Perhaps my question was not as clear as I might have liked it to be. I would have imagined that, given that this workforce strategy was finalised in March 2021, you would have already been aware of this national shortage of teachers and would have built that into your strategy as to how you would go forward into 2022 and 2023. My question was about the six focus areas outlined in your workforce strategy, and a progress report. I appreciate your comments; I did not mean, “We’re working on this and we’re working on that.” I am asking about any actual outcomes, measurable improvements or measurable results, given that we are already halfway through the term of this workforce strategy.

Ms Haire: I am happy to speak to a couple of the highlights, if you like, Ms Lawder, and Mr Matthews might jump in as well, or Mr Ackland. For example, one of the elements of the workforce strategy is around the recruitment and retention of teachers. One of the things that the Auditor-General comments on in his report is the work that we have done around early educators. This is something which is now built into our

enterprise agreement as well. There is certainly evidence that is well recognised that it is really important to support teachers early in their career so that they remain in the profession.

One of the things that we have implemented—and this was the third year, so this has been very much an important part of the workforce strategy—was to have that really intensive focus on early educators, not just through induction, which is a common strategy that is used across education systems and other professions, but building in a multiyear program to support early educators, so that they grow in the profession, they are mentored on site, and they are given additional release time under the enterprise agreement so that they build their skills and are supported in the profession.

That is one of the examples of an element of the strategy that has now been implemented. There is a range of many others. I will ask Mr Matthews if there are other highlights that he wants to mention.

MS LAWDER: Have you seen a lower exit or churn rate or a higher satisfaction rate—tangible outcomes in relation to the work that you are doing? That is what I am trying to get at.

Mr Matthews: Ms Lawder, going to the question of separation, the separation rate for education is around five per cent, which is very good. Obviously, nationally, there is a phenomenon that new educators can leave the profession after a relatively short period of time, after three to five years. That is why we have put in place those strategies that Ms Haire has spoken about.

In terms of the numbers of teachers that have left just after they have commenced, I will correct the record if I am incorrect on this, but when I asked that question recently, we had less than 10 first-year teachers that left, year on year, in terms of leaving education after only one year of teaching. From our perspective, obviously, we do not want to lose any teachers, but that gives you the general ballpark regarding the numbers that we are talking about.

Also, in relation to the annual report and questions on notice from Mr Hanson, you will see that we have increased our headcount by 496 people between June 2019 and June 2020, and 210 of that headcount is teachers. We are a significantly growing organisation and we are in a very competitive environment, as Ms Haire and the minister have spoken about. Nonetheless we do continue to be successful in attracting people to the organisation and expanding as an organisation.

MS LAWDER: I could ask many more questions, but in the interest of everyone having an opportunity to ask more questions, perhaps you would be able to provide the committee, in relation to the six focus areas, with any KPIs or measures that you set up at the start, when you developed the strategy. If appropriate, or if you collected them, could you provide a progress report, given that we are halfway through? Would that be possible?

Mr Matthews: Ms Lawder, we will take that on notice and see what is available for you and the committee.

MS LAWDER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: In the Auditor-General's report, the Auditor-General remarks that it is somewhat unusual, for an organisation of 4,000 people, that, in the inquiry period, only one individual was performance managed through the formal processes. Could you provide some comment as to whether or not that one in 4,000 number accurately reflects underperformance in the directorate.

Ms Haire: Mr Pettersson, thank you for that question. I will ask Ms Simmons whether she would like to make a comment on how performance is managed in the school environment; then Mr Matthews might talk about the specifics under the enterprise agreement.

Ms Simmons: I acknowledge that I have read the privilege statement. In terms of underperformance in schools, there is a whole process that supports the development of staff. Rather than focusing on the gaps and the deficits, there is a focus around building teachers' capacity. We provide a range of professional learning supports. Part of the PDP process is to inform the supports for the teacher in the school. Often, in our schools, some teachers make a decision to leave prior to there being any formal process around dismissal. Many teachers, right across the country—it is not just about the ACT—actually improve their performance, because the notion is about improving performance.

From a positive perspective, we want more teachers in our service; we want to improve teachers, and that is our focus. That is built into the professional learning plans that sit in schools. It is built into the support plans that schools have and the focus that the school has in terms of its action plan. That is how we focus on supporting teachers. Some of that is in relation to specific skills around particular cohorts of students. Sometimes it is about understanding the curriculum and being able to articulate that, using a variety of pedagogies that sit within the framework for delivery at the school level.

Our focus is around building performance and building capacity. When there is an instance around performance that needs to be addressed—Mr Matthews might be able to make more comment about that—there is a process that sits with that. Obviously, we keep that confidential but in the spirit of positivity.

Mr Matthews: The only thing I will add to those comments is to draw out, of course, that the underperformance process is the formal part of the process. It really is the end of the line, as such, after all of the work that Ms Simmons talked about. The way that educators approach their work, and the way they are trained, is very much to take a learning posture and a learning disposition. That is the way that schools operate. A continuous cycle of feedback occurs at a school level, including through the annual performance discussions, as well as the professional learning communities.

Once there are performance issues, we expect those to be raised by the supervisor with the individual; then that process of rectification that Ms Simmons talked about comes into play. It is only when we have gone through all of those processes and we exercise the formal requirements under the enterprise bargaining agreement that that number—one—would come into play. It is certainly not reflective of the amount of

professional engagement and the level of professional conversations that are occurring at school level about practice improvement.

THE CHAIR: That would reflect some of the evidence we heard from the Australian Education Union. They told the committee that often it is the informal processes that are utilised. My question then becomes: is that formal performance management process working, or fit for purpose, if no-one is going through it? People go through this informal process; then, at the point where you get to some type of regulated, formal process, people opt out of the system. That screams to me that that process is not doing what it is intended to do, if no-one is actually doing it.

Mr Matthews: My comment on that, Mr Pettersson—working across a range of different government agencies, not just Education—is that we try very hard not to reach the formal process. All of the engagements and discussions are around positive work environments and positive discussions between supervisors and employees. It is not necessarily a failure of the formal process if it is not used. Once the formal process kicks into gear, there is, of course, a range of very significant sanctions that can be applied to individuals, including and up to dismissal. Obviously, that is an industrial process that is worked through at that time.

Essentially, all of the coaching, mentoring and performance development occurs as early as possible. The formal process essentially is available for both the employer and to protect the rights of the individuals, if all of those other previous efforts have not worked.

Ms Haire: If I could add to Mr Matthews' answer, the formal performance management process is part of a suite of performance development and performance support processes which Ms Simmons set out. The annual cycle of all of our staff being involved in a performance development discussion is where, ideally, if the system is working really well, teachers and others are given that feedback on how to improve, and that is built into their plan and worked on with them over the year.

There is a range of formal performance management processes. With respect to the part that you are talking about, as Mr Matthews said, if all of those other processes have not succeeded then you do need to have that as a final option. It is really important to note that the performance development process that takes place on an annual cycle for staff is a really valuable and important professional discussion to build the capacity and to identify opportunities for development, as well as opportunities for further challenge and career aspirations, including opportunities for advancement, the transfer round et cetera. There are other elements that members of the committee have talked about today.

THE CHAIR: The committee has heard evidence that some principals do not want to proceed to a formal performance management process because that would mean the teacher would become ineligible for transfer. Is this something that the Education Directorate is aware of or has heard of?

Ms Haire: I have not heard of that, Mr Pettersson. I have not seen that in any of the submissions that you have received, but I may have missed that.

Mr Matthews: Can I make a general comment about that, Mr Pettersson? Normally, when an underperformance process is instigated, the employee does stay in the role that they are currently occupying because, essentially, that is the benchmark that performance can be assessed against. When the underperformance process in accordance with the EA is instigated, it is against the job that the person has been doing. The objective is to monitor and measure the performance of the individual in the role that they are familiar with. That is fairly usual practice in relation to underperformance management in public sector agencies.

MR DAVIS: I am probably fixating on relief teachers a little bit today, so stay with me. I will take us back to the approximately 450 number that we heard earlier, regarding how many are currently in the pool. Do we have any information on trends, about how that compares over the last 12 months, five years and 10 years in the directorate? Is our pool of potential relief teaching staff increasing, decreasing or stable?

Ms Haire: I do not have that data in front of me, Mr Davis. I do not know that we have it with us. We may need to take that on notice, to look at the pool over the last several years.

MR DAVIS: I am happy for you to take that on notice. Can I get a better understanding of what obligations are on casual staff, relief staff, who are qualified to be classroom teachers but are employed by the directorate to be relief staff? What costs are associated with professional development? What do we need from them in order to put them into a school?

Ms Haire: Mr Davis, are you referring to the registration with the TQI and the requirements for professional development as part of that registration?

MR DAVIS: I am, yes; the TQI and, more broadly, are there any other additional requirements from the directorate in order for somebody with a Bachelor of Education, somebody who is qualified to be a classroom teacher, being employed and being available to schools on this casual relief pool?

Ms Haire: To be employed by us, a teacher has to be registered with the Teacher Quality Institute. Ms McAlister is here to describe what that requires. We do not have further requirements, however. We do support relief teachers, where we can, to undertake their professional learning in conjunction with our schools. I will ask Ms McAlister to talk about the requirements of the TQI.

MR DAVIS: Just before we go to the TQI, Ms Haire, would you be able to outline what some of those supports are? What supports does the directorate provide for relief teaching staff, in order to do those qualifications?

Ms Haire: In terms of the professional development opportunities, as Mr Matthews outlined, and possibly in relation to your constituent, where a casual teacher has a close relationship with a particular school, they are encouraged to include their relief teachers in their professional learning, particularly in what we call week zero, which is the week before school begins, when schools undertake a range of professional learning. The relief teachers who are connected with the school are often included in

that.

If I could add to my other answer in relation to what we require of relief teachers, of course, in addition to being registered with the TQI, we also require them to have a working with vulnerable people check, as you would expect. That is, as you know, a separate process that is undertaken through Access Canberra. We do support, where we can, relief teachers to undertake professional learning alongside the school staff that they work with.

Further support for professional learning for casual relief teachers has been one of the issues that we have discussed with the AEU, as part of the teacher shortage task force. We have been consulting with the AEU, and they have been consulting with their members who are casual teachers, about what other potential supports there could be to support their professional development. I note that, for some, it can be more difficult to access professional learning if they work between a number of different schools. Over the last couple of months we have been consulting and taking that into account, and looking for some further supports that we can arrange and negotiate.

Ms McAlister can explain what the baseline requirements are, if that is helpful, Mr Davis.

MR DAVIS: No, that covers off a lot of it. It is not that I do not want to hear from you, Ms McAlister. In an instance where a relief teacher has been invited by their home school, or the school where they do most of their work, to take part in collective professional development, are there any costs associated with that for the casual relief teacher?

Ms Haire: No.

MR DAVIS: If, say, they were casual by nature and worked in a number of different schools and therefore would do their required professional development through the TQI, are there fees associated with that?

Ms Haire: There are fees associated with the registration. The TQI makes available information about professional learning that would satisfy their requirements. Ms McAlister, do you want to add to that?

Ms McAlister: I have read and agree with the privilege statement. Yes, we focus on providing online, no cost, or low cost, options, particularly for our casual teacher workforce. All teachers registered in the ACT need to do 20 hours of annual professional learning for their teacher registration requirements. That is a mixture of TQI-accredited programs and a category that we call “teacher identified”, which is quite broad. With respect to supporting all teachers, but particularly our casual teachers, we look at our online and low-cost programs. At the moment we have 269 online programs, we have 197 no-cost programs, and we have 101 that are both online and no cost.

Further, TQI hosts a casual teacher network that is really well attended. It has quite high numbers. We promote these PL offerings to our casual teachers, the availability of these offerings, to allow them to choose learning that is relevant.

MR DAVIS: How many casual teachers are a part of that network?

Ms McAlister: At the last meeting we held, over 70 attended, and the numbers are growing. We work with that network to choose topics of interest. We meet once a quarter, and the feedback is that they have really appreciated that network.

MS LAWDER: Referring once again to your submission, on page 3, it talks about a revised three-year induction program commencing in 2022. Are you able to give me a brief run-down of what has been revised? What is new and improved from a previous induction program?

Ms Haire: Ms Lawder, that is the early educators program that I talked about earlier. One of the main aspects of it is to shift from only focusing on induction, and only focusing on the first year of teaching, to understanding that the early phase of a teacher's career goes for the first, at least, three years, and focusing on support across those three years.

It is not that induction is not important; we have a five-day induction which was redesigned. The first delivery of that was in 2020, and it was redesigned to focus on the tools that early educators need to hit the ground running in their first term of teaching.

The other elements of the redesign are to change the thinking from this being induction and the first year to the first years of teaching. The evidence tells us that it is not only about the first year; to successfully establish and launch as a highly skilled professional, there is support and professional learning for the first three years. That includes mentoring at the school level and, as I said earlier, additional time to undertake professional learning. That is the redesigned program. That has been well received. The Auditor-General made some suggestions about how it could be further improved and, as we agreed in our submission, we will be looking at those and implementing those suggestions as well.

MS LAWDER: With previous induction, where you said you focused more on the first year, nevertheless, I imagine you would have had feedback and evaluations from participants. What sort of feedback did you have, and had you already been incorporating feedback into the program? If so, why is it so different? Why are you now moving to the three-year one? I know you have acknowledged that, for new educators, it takes three years, but I am trying to work out, with the feedback, the difference between the previous delivery of this induction course and what it will be now.

Mr Matthews: We have an evaluation for every induction program that we do. We take that into account for future design. The things that new educators have said to us over the years is that they want that learning to be spaced out. They do not want it all provided up front. That strongly informed the changes, as well as our engagement with the AEU about that.

The other thing that they have said is that they really want the lived experience of other new educators to be featured. We have made sure that, in terms of the content

and how we deliver that, we involve as much lived experience from other new educators as possible. They are two examples of feedback that we have incorporated.

MS LAWDER: With the lived experience of other new educators, is there an implicit tension in that, given that we have heard in some previous hearings, for example, about the difficulties in releasing teachers to go to training. I am assuming that if a teacher is being asked to give a session at an induction course, there are pressures regarding being released from your everyday class activities, given the backfilling and that type of thing. How do you manage that sort of tension?

Mr Matthews: It is an important point, Ms Lawder. We do want those new educators to be relieved so that they can engage in this. A lot of the training that we are talking about occurs before the commencement of the school year. Ms Haire talked about week zero; we would engage new educators in that process. We have very much taken on board that feedback from the Auditor-General about the importance of making sure that all of those new educators do get access to their additional time. That is why we have made that investment through the enterprise bargaining agreement, and it is our strong commitment to give those teachers the best possible start.

MS LAWDER: When you are trying to get someone to come and talk about their lived experience, do you give a commitment to the school that, if it is during classroom time, they will get someone to backfill that spot?

Mr Matthews: Generally, I would say those arrangements are very much negotiated between the principal and the staff member concerned. We want to make sure that the school is not affected. Generally, the staff that we are talking about love the opportunity to share their experience with other new educators. Having been through the first one, two or three years, they are very keen to help their peers to navigate that very difficult start to their teaching career.

THE CHAIR: On that note, on behalf of the committee, I would like to thank Minister Berry and all of the officials for making time for us today. The committee genuinely appreciates it. The secretary will provide you with a copy of the proof transcript of today's hearing, when it is available, to check for accuracy. Thank you, everybody.

The committee adjourned at 2.55 pm.